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## Liberalism and Victorian Musical Sympathy

Bennett Zon

Liberalism is a fundamentally polyphonic proposition, its relationship to music deep and broad, historical and philosophical. This chapter in the Victorian liberalism uses John Rawls' concept of 'overlapping consensus' to map conceptual territories. Rawls' liberalism has already received considerable exploration amongst musicologists because he uses the symphony orchestra as a metaphor to characterize the concept of overlapping consensus,<sup>1</sup> and the life-story of his classic book *A Theory of Justice* (1971) has been made into a musical *A Theory of Justice: The Musical* (2013), but it would seem as if little has been made of overlapping consensus in the area of Victorian musical culture. I use overlapping consensus differently from the way Rawls himself uses it, however. Rawls uses music to defend overlapping consensus, describing two different types of orchestras: one of equally talented players; the other, unequally talented players, but both achieving similar results. I use music specifically to test the presence and activity of an underlying liberal concept—sympathy. Rawls himself describes a liberal as 'the perfectly sympathetic being.'<sup>2</sup> I aim to prove that Victorian music not only *illustrates* overlapping consensus (to use Rawls' own description of what he does),<sup>3</sup> but *creates* it through the emotion of sympathy. According to Michael Freeden, the essence of Rawls' liberal theory can be divided into two components, libertarianism and egalitarianism,<sup>4</sup> and so this chapter is structured similarly. I begin with an introduction to liberalism, overlapping consensus and its Victorian antecedents. A section on Victorian sympathy follows, highlighting the central role of Herbert Spencer and Charles

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<sup>1</sup> See Nancy S. Love, *Musical Democracy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), particularly Chapter 3, 'Rawlsian Harmonies: Orchestrating Consensus', 45-66.

<sup>2</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, rev ed., 1999), 162.

<sup>3</sup> Nancy S. Love, 'Rawlsian Harmonies: Overlapping Consensus Symphony Orchestra', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20.6 (2003): 121-40, 133.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Freeden, *Liberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 95.

Darwin, which is itself followed by the main section of the chapter. That section opens with a brief account of liberal musical sympathy, and is then divided into two conceptually inter-related sections on libertarianism and egalitarianism. Libertarianism covers the concept of individual freedom underlying the vastly popular work of John Curwen, founder of the Tonic Sol-fa movement; egalitarianism interrogates the way equality operates within the evolutionary musicology of C. Hubert H. Parry. A conclusion summarizes key points and ponders the reasons for a post-Victorian evanescence in musical sympathy.

## 1. Liberalism

Any definition of liberalism is, by its very nature, a contradiction in terms. Michael Freeden claims that ‘There is no single unambiguous thing called liberalism [. . .] it may therefore be more accurate to talk about liberalism in the plural, all part of a broad family exhibiting both similarities and differences.’<sup>5</sup> *Liberalisms* may typify the conundrum of liberalism, but in theory and practice even the conceptually capacious term *liberalisms* seems inadequate when describing the multiplicity of competing political and ideological demands of liberalism more generally. Liberalism, according to Amanda Anderson, is fundamentally ‘bleak’: ‘a pessimism or bleakness of attitude that derives from awareness of all those forces and conditions that threaten the realization of liberal ambitions.’<sup>6</sup> Inevitably, not everyone agrees; without sacrificing optimism Jonathan Quong, for example, argues for ‘liberalism without perfection’.<sup>7</sup> Quong attacks the liberal perfectionism underpinning Anderson’s bleakness by rallying to the cry of another, arguably more positive kind of liberalism—political liberalism. Hotly contested for being too ‘thin’ to encompass society in all its

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<sup>5</sup> Freeden, *Liberalism*, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2016), 22.

<sup>7</sup> See Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

multicultural diversity,<sup>8</sup> political liberalism nevertheless espouses an inherently more positive approach to liberalism. Martha Nussbaum encapsulates this attitude when exploring the ideological substructure in John Rawls' classic *Political Liberalism* (1993):

Can liberal constitutional democracy, built on values of mutual respect and reciprocity, be stable—not just as a grudging *modus vivendi* but out of robust ethical commitment—in a world of religious and secular pluralism? Or, to use his words, ‘[H]ow is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?’<sup>9</sup>

Rawls's famous answer to this intractable problem is ‘overlapping consensus’. Admittedly contentious, the concept of overlapping consensus applies—as David Thomas suggests<sup>10</sup>—to today as much as it might to the Victorian period very broadly. According to Rawls, overlapping consensus is

moral both in its object and grounds, and so is distinct from a consensus, inevitably fragile, founded solely on self- or group-interest, even when ordered by a well-framed constitution. The idea of an overlapping consensus enables us to understand how a constitutional regime characterized by the fact of pluralism might, despite its deep divisions, achieve stability and social unity by the public recognition of a reasonable political conception of justice.<sup>11</sup>

It is debatable whether the Victorians would have recognized Rawls's concept of overlapping consensus, but certainly, according to George Levine, his intentions broadly mirror Victorian

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<sup>8</sup> Iris Marion Young, ‘Survey Article: Rawls's *Political Liberalism*’, *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 3.2 (1995): [181-90], 181.

<sup>9</sup> Martha Nussbaum, ‘Introduction’, in Thom Brooks and Martha C. Nussbaum (eds), *Rawls's Political Liberalism* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015), [1-56], 3.

<sup>10</sup> David Wayne Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> John Rawls, ‘The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus’, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 7.1 (1987): [1-25], 2.

liberal aspirations of the period, not least in its seemingly unstoppable trajectory towards secularism. In *Realism, Ethics and Secularism: Essays on Victorian Literature and Science* (2008) Levine propounds an overlapping consensus based on culturally instantiated aspects of individual and social life, law and behaviour.<sup>12</sup> Charles Taylor would later provide a not dissimilar template in *A Secular Age* (2007); for him overlapping consensus is the agreement on a politics of solidarity—on humanitarian action—amongst people widely diverse and divergent in religious and ideological background.<sup>13</sup> Taylor, like Levine, espouses a concept of overlapping consensus which, like liberalism, focuses on ethical cooperation. Rawls himself speaks about ‘the virtues of tolerance and being ready to meet others halfway, and the virtue of reasonableness and the sense of fairness.’<sup>14</sup> As Dietmar Rothermund explains, although Rawls may not refer to ‘negotiation’ or ‘compromise’ overlapping consensus is fundamentally a concept rooted in the reasonableness of cooperation—a concept Victorians would certainly have understood and promulgated.<sup>15</sup> Herbert Spencer had argued for cooperation in *Social Statics* (1851), and it resurfaces in *Principles of Sociology* (1874-96) as part of his multi-volume *Synthetic Philosophy* (1862-97). In *Principles of Sociology* he anticipates Rawls by presupposing the sociological advantage of cooperative reasonableness: ‘A society, in the sociological sense, is formed only when, besides juxtaposition, there is co-operation. Co-operation is made possible by society, and makes society possible. It presupposes associated men; and men remain associated because of the benefits co-operation yields them. But there cannot be concerted actions without agencies by which actions are adjusted in their times, amounts, and kinds; and the actions cannot be of various kinds without the co-operators undertaking different duties. That is to say, the co-operators must

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<sup>12</sup> George Levine, *Realism, Ethics and Secularism: Essays on Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 210.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 693.

<sup>14</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 157.

<sup>15</sup> Dietmar Rothermund, ‘Negotiating Compromises in Cross-cultural Conversations’, in Anindita N. Balslev (ed.), *On India: Self-Image and Counter-Image* (Los Angeles et al: Sage, 2013), [133-146], 138.

become organized, either voluntarily or involuntarily.’<sup>16</sup> For Rawls ‘reasonable persons see that the burdens of judgment set limits to what can be reasonably justified to others, and so they endorse some form of livery of conscience and freedom of thought.’<sup>17</sup> Rothermund draws our attention to their similarities by invoking an incisive, historically alternative reading of Spencerian evolutionism. Spencer coined the term ‘survival of the fittest’ in the context of social cooperation, where the fittest were not (as caricatured in later debates about evolutionism) determined to trample competition at all costs, but were in fact ‘the most resourceful co-operators—or, in Rawls’ terms, the most reasonable persons rather than the ‘outrageous’ rationalists who maximized their interest regardless of others.’<sup>18</sup> Richard P. Hiskes echoes Rothermund and many others when he claims that Spencer—like many Victorians, and perhaps most—viewed cooperation not as the end of evolution but as its means, and its individuals the moving forces in its process.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Sympathy

The evolutionary advantage of cooperation is attested in literature ranging across the sciences and humanities. Karl Sigmund, for example, spells it out in genetic terms in ‘Sympathy and Similarity: The Evolutionary Dynamics of Cooperation’ (2009): ‘The advantage of mutual help is threatened by defectors, who exploit the benefits provided by others without providing benefits in return. Cooperation can only be sustained if it is preferentially channelled toward cooperators and away from defectors.’<sup>20</sup> Discussion of cooperation at the level of gene is commonplace in modern science—see for example debates whirling around Richard

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology* (1874-96), cited in F. Howard Collins, *An Epitome of The Synthetic Philosophy* (London: Williams and Norgate: 1889), 448-49.

<sup>17</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Rothermund, ‘Negotiating Compromises in Cross-cultural Conversations’, 139.

<sup>19</sup> Richard P. Hiskes, ‘Spencer and the Liberal Idea of Community’, in John Offer (ed.), *Herbert Spencer: Critical Assessments*, Volume 4 (London and New York; Routledge, 2000), [43-55] 49-51.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Sigmund, ‘Sympathy and Similarity: The Evolutionary Dynamics of Cooperation’, *Proceedings of the national Academy of Sciences*, 106.21 (2009): [8405-8406], 8405.

Dawkin's assessment of altruism in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), or Mark Ridley's eponymously titled *The Cooperative Gene: How Mendel's Demon Explains the Evolution of Complex Beings* (2001).<sup>21</sup> While Victorians might not have understood the genetic origins of cooperation they did appreciate its evolutionary implications for human behaviour, particularly in the form of emotional sympathy. Here again Herbert Spencer speaks for a multitude when he claims that

The evolution of those highest social sentiments which have sympathy for their root, has been all along checked by those activities which the struggle for existence between tribes and between nations has necessitated. Only when the struggle for existence has ceased to go on under the form of war, can these highest social sentiments attain their full development.<sup>22</sup>

Stretching back to the Greeks, the concept of sympathy has a longstanding place in the hearts and minds of British liberal thinkers. Sympathy derives simply enough from the Greek *sym* and *pathos*: to suffer with (not unlike its Latin offspring *compassion*), but its simplicity belies an underlying cultural complexity—'a dizzying range of rhetorical contexts that obfuscate its meaning.'<sup>23</sup> Rob Boddice, accordingly, characterizes it as 'a vehicle for translating the emotions of others [ . . . ] an emotional disposition [ . . . and ] an emotional recognition of the plight of the object in question.'<sup>24</sup> Victorians would have sympathized with Boddice's predicament, as it were; for them the new evolutionary science of the emotion of sympathy—typified in the works of Spencer, but manifestly problematized by Darwinism—also divided

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<sup>21</sup> See Jag Bhalia, 'Selfish Genes Also Must Cooperate' (guest blog, 12 June 2013), *Scientific American*, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/selfish-genes-also-must-cooperate>; and Mark Ridley, *The Cooperative Gene: How Mendel's Demon Explains the Evolution of Complex Beings* (New York: The Free Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Spencer, *Principles of Psychology* (1870, 1880), in Collins, *An Epitome of The Synthetic Philosophy*, 229-30.

<sup>23</sup> Rob Boddice, *The Science of Sympathy: Morality, Evolution, and Victorian Civilization* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 3.

<sup>24</sup> Boddice, *Science of Sympathy*, 4.

opinion, not least on the origin and role moral actions play in the society at large. For Darwin, moral actions are not culturally constructed, they are inherited instincts strengthened by habit, and although they operate at the level of individual they benefit the community as a whole. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), for example, he opines that ‘the habit followed by the males of some social animals, of defending the community and of attacking their enemies or their prey in concert, may perhaps have originated from mutual sympathy.’<sup>25</sup> Darwin would be unrelenting when pressed on the role of the individual as against that of society. For him sympathy’s dizzying array of rhetorical contexts produced an opportunity for society to improve from the ground up—from the level of individual agent of sympathy: communities ‘which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.’<sup>26</sup> Darwin would come to extend evolutionary promise to the entire animal kingdom itself, but not without abandoning the Whiggish moral values of teleological progress. For neo-Lamarckian Darwin, ‘as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress toward perfection.’<sup>27</sup> Yet as this suggests, although an inherited instinct strengthened by habit, human sympathy also depended upon the development of reasonableness, to use Rawls’ term, and as Darwin’s own personal sentiments suggest, members of the human race did not all have it to the same extent—‘social lessers’ like children, women, ‘savages’, for example—because sympathy was a relatively recent evolutionary acquisition.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871), Volume 1, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: John Murray, 1874), [VOL No.? – THIS JUST ONE VOLUME] 107.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859), 489.

<sup>28</sup> Paul White, ‘Becoming and Animal: Darwin and the Evolution of Sympathy’, in Angelique Richardson (ed.), *After Darwin: Animals, Emotions, and the Mind* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), [112-135], 127.



In Darwin's terms sympathy occurs 'when we recognise that we ought to control our thoughts';<sup>29</sup> it is 'the highest possible stage in moral culture'<sup>30</sup> – the 'virtue' of 'humanity'.<sup>31</sup>

Darwin, I would suggest, underwrites Rawls' 'reasonable moral psychology';<sup>32</sup> not dissimilarly, for Martha Nussbaum Rawls proposes

a society of human beings, not angels, and he knows well that human beings do not automatically pursue the common good. Thus, even though in his well-ordered society problems of exclusion and hierarchy have been overcome, they have been overcome by human beings who still have the underlying tendencies that produce those problems.<sup>33</sup>

Strangely enough, Nussbaum omits Darwin from her landmark *Political Emotions*, but she does invoke the name of an originally protean—if now largely unloved—philosophical voice in nineteenth-century liberal thought, Auguste Comte. Alternately admired and detested by the Victorians<sup>34</sup>—and today of disputed liberal credentials<sup>35</sup>—Comte like Darwin after him believed that the individual expansion of sympathy and the corporate expansion of civilization were somehow symbiotically related.<sup>36</sup> Comte, as controversial a figure as he was, played into the hands of a Victorian liberalism consumed by the need to explain that relationship, and the emotion of sympathy provided their answer. The best way to promote humanity is to promote the emotion of sympathy, and the best way to promote sympathy is to cultivate 'the spirit of universal brotherhood'<sup>37</sup>—cooperation, in as many words; overlapping consensus, in others; *liberalisms* in the broadest sense of meaning. As John Glendening so

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<sup>29</sup> Darwin, *Descent of Man* (1871), 101.

<sup>30</sup> Darwin, *Descent of Man* (1874), 123.

<sup>31</sup> Darwin, *Descent of Man* (1871), 101.

<sup>32</sup> Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 82.

<sup>33</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 10.

<sup>34</sup> See Robert C. Scharff, *Comte After Positivism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> Brigid Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London, New York and Delhi: Anthem Press, 2007), 153.

<sup>36</sup> Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 59.

<sup>37</sup> Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 61.

aply puts it, for writers like Thomas Hardy Darwin bases his explanation for the origin of morality ‘on the “social instincts” of gregarious species and the sympathy that accrues from these instincts as they reinforce cooperation and the survival value it bestows.’<sup>38</sup>

### 3. Liberal Musical Sympathy

If anything typifies the consensually overlapping spirit of *liberalisms* surely it must be the individual and corporate activity Chris Small calls ‘musicking’;<sup>39</sup> and music is by its very nature intrinsically sympathetic<sup>40</sup>—Roger Scruton describes it as ‘a dance with sympathy’.<sup>41</sup> Scruton follows in a long line of philosophers who accord musical emotion an almost transcendental status.<sup>42</sup> It conjures up ‘a pure world of sympathy, in which they [musical emotions] exist in their completed form, unsullied by self-interest’,<sup>43</sup> yet it is also ‘a character-forming force’: ‘Nobody’, he asserts,

who understands the experiences of melody, harmony, and rhythm will doubt their value. Not only are they the distillation of centuries of social life: they are also forms of knowledge, providing the competence to reach *out* of ourselves through music. Through melody, harmony, and rhythm, we enter a world where others exists besides the self, a world that is full of feeling but also ordered, disciplined but free. That is why music is a character-forming force.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> John Glendending, *The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels: An Entangled Bank*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007/2016, 80.

<sup>39</sup> See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> See Guiseppe Gerbino, ‘Reflection: Music and Sympathy’, in Eric Schliesser (ed.), *Sympathy: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), [102-106 IS THE PAGE RANGE], 102-106.

<sup>41</sup> See Jeanette Bicknell, ‘Scruton on Understanding Music’, *Nordisk Estetisk Tidskrift*, 25-6 (2002): 132-143, and especially section 2, ‘Sympathy and Involvement with Music’, 138-140.

<sup>42</sup> Ferdia J. Stone-Davis, ‘Entering the Unknown: Music, Self and God, in James Bryson (ed.), *The Religious Philosophy of Roger Scruton* (London et al: Bloomsbury, 2016), [165-178], 169.

<sup>43</sup> Scruton, cited in Stone-Davis, ‘Entering the Unknown’, 169.

<sup>44</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 502.

Scruton speaks a language with which many Victorian liberals would have identified; according to Spencer:

In its bearings upon human happiness, this emotional language which musical culture develops and refines is only second in importance to the language of the intellect; perhaps not even second to it. For these modifications of voice produced by feelings are the means of exciting like feelings in others. Joined with gestures and expressions of face, they give life to the otherwise dead words in which the intellect utters its ideas, and so enable the hearer not only to *understand* the state of mind they accompany, but to *partake* of that state. In short they are the chief media of *sympathy*.<sup>45</sup>

For Spencer musical sympathy creates social altruism; indeed, musical sympathy generates our ability to repress ‘the antagonistic elements of our characters and to develop the social ones; to curb our purely selfish desires and exercise our unselfish ones; to replace private gratifications by gratifications resulting from or involving the pleasure of others’; it is ‘by this adaptation to the social state that the sympathetic side of our nature is being unfolded.’<sup>46</sup>

Darwin describes music in almost identical terms; for him music reproduces primitive emotions experienced with functions of survival, such as procreation, rivalry and courtship: ‘sensations and ideas excited in us by music, or by the cadences of impassioned oratory, appear from their vagueness, yet depth, like mental reversions to the emotions and thoughts of a long-past age’;<sup>47</sup> indeed, music recalls ‘in a vague and indefinite manner, those strong emotions which were felt during long-past ages, when, as is probable, our early progenitors

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<sup>45</sup> Herbert Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, *Fraser’s Magazine* (Oct. 1857), in Herbert Spencer, *Literary Style and Music: Including Two Short Essays on Gracefulness and Beauty* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 73-74. 45–106. [Original Emphasis? – YES – ALSO NOTE ADDITIONAL ITALICS FOR THE WORD SYMPATHY ITSELF]

<sup>46</sup> Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, 74; 74. [what does the semi-colon indicate here? – TWO SEPARATE QUOTATIONS]

<sup>47</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols., (London: John Murray, 1871), Volume 2, 336.

courted each other by the aid of vocal tones. And as several of our strongest emotions—grief, great joy, love, and sympathy—lead to the free secretion of tears, it is not surprisingly that music should be apt to cause our eyes to be suffused with tears, especially when we are already softened by the tenderer feelings.’<sup>48</sup> Amongst these music-emotion survivals Darwin hierarchizes, the true emotion of courtship: ‘Love’, Darwin claims, ‘is still the commonest themes of our own songs.’<sup>49</sup>

### 3a. Libertarianism

These descriptions of musical sympathy may give the wrong impression—that our emotional reaction to music is almost involuntary, as some recent research would seem to suggest.<sup>50</sup> But in this respect Scruton, Spencer and Darwin reflect a characteristically Victorian understanding of emotion, and with it the virtuous circle of self-improvement; as Nussbaum says of Comte: ‘Becoming virtuous is a matter of cultivating appropriate habits, in emotion as in conduct.’<sup>51</sup> But there is more to Victorian musical sympathy than the alignment of emotion and conduct. For Spencer, Darwin and like thinkers musical sympathy is at the heart of both libertarian and egalitarian thinking, on the one hand promoting liberty through beliefs such as political freedom, autonomy and self-determination, and on the other hand through an array of concepts linked to equality. When Spencer proclaimed musical emotions to be the chief media of sympathy he was pushing an open door, not simply at the level of social engagement (in the way Rawls suggests an orchestra emblemizes liberalism) but at the level of musical practice itself. At its most basic, libertarianism is a belief in the naturally inviolate rights of and respect for others, even if the instantiation of those rights and respect can

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<sup>48</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872), 219.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 336.

<sup>50</sup> See Amy Meredith Belfi, ‘A Neuropsychological Investigation of Music, Emotion, and Autobiographical Memory’, PhD diss., University of Iowa (2015).

<sup>51</sup> Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 65.

potentially produce poor results.<sup>52</sup> For Spencer libertarianism is grounded in a sentiment of justice, itself fuelled by sympathy; this was basis of a well-ordered society.<sup>53</sup> According to Spencer ‘sympathy is the basis of all the social sentiments’.<sup>54</sup> Musical sympathy facilitates this by liberating language from its inability to communicate emotion directly.

Tonic Sol-fa provides a good example of musical sympathy in a number of ways. Founded by John Curwen in the 1840s Tonic Sol-fa originated in the kind of low-church congregationalism which tended to favour musical simplicity and purely melodic singing accompanied by the organ and choir. Curwen accepts that to some extent all congregational singing ‘must yield to the unisonous element’, however harmony is by its very nature more emotionally advanced: there is a ‘charm’, he opines,

in that variety in unity, that wondrous blending of voices [. . .]. It suits the instincts of the human heart. It suits the worship of God. This cordial fellowship of various sounds, this rich confluence of melodious streams, is most becoming to the assembly of saints. It speaks of holy rivalry and blending sympathies.<sup>55</sup>

Theist Curwen and atheist Spencer may diverge over religion but sympathy brings their libertarianisms together; in fact Curwen treats harmony the way Spencer treats music—as an evolutionary apogee driven and liberated by emotion. For Spencer music is impassioned speech—‘the idealized language of emotion’;<sup>56</sup> for Curwen harmony is impassioned melody—‘the natural constitution of our voices’, he suggests, ‘the proper scope and range for striking and varied melody, as well as the Christian’s desire to bring a full and perfect

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<sup>52</sup> Jason Brennan, *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xi.

<sup>53</sup> Herbert Spencer, ‘From Freedom to Bondage’, in T. Mackay (ed.), *A Plea for Liberty* (1891), cited in Michael Taylor (ed.), *Herbert Spencer and the Limits of the State: The Late Nineteenth-Century Debate between Individualism and Collectivism* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), [3-23], 23.

<sup>54</sup> Jay Rumney, *Herbert Spencer’s Sociology* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1961/2017), 60.

<sup>55</sup> John Curwen, “‘What To Do,’ and “‘How To Do It.’”: A Lecture on Congregational Psalmody’, *The Tonic Sol-Fa Reporter, And Magazine of Vocal Music for the People*, 1 (1853): [12-15], 12; 12-13.

<sup>56</sup> Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, 69.

offering of praise, all combine to favour Harmony.’<sup>57</sup> Curwen also describes unisonous singing like the state, claiming it makes little use of the people and treats them as ‘a company of incapables. It makes much of the choir and the organ. We would make much of the people, and make little of the choir and the organ.’<sup>58</sup> Making much of the people (the congregation) involves a concomitant dismantling of the state (the choir and organ), and at the same time requires the cultivation of sympathy, or altruism—‘in some cases one of these [melodies] must be sacrificed to the other’—if as a form of liberalism it hopes to achieve the cooperative state of overlapping consensus; of holy rivalry and blending sympathies. Every hymn and hymn tune has an emotional character (and individual identity) of its own, and the character of the hymn must sympathetically match its text the same way the harmony matches its melody. At the same time, in the way that melody and text are ‘harmonized’ for the good of musical expression everyone should ‘make great sacrifices of “favourite” tunes, for the public good.’<sup>59</sup>

As this suggests, musical altruism arises from more than an evangelical moral code—it emerges from an essentialized understanding of the music itself. For evangelical Curwen music would not simply have prompted sympathetic emotions, it would have embodied them. Albert Blackwell makes a compelling case for music being ‘sacramental’.<sup>60</sup> Following church fathers and more recent exegetical writing, for example, he maintains a Pythagorean approach with markedly liberal resonances: ‘there is a pervasive affinity or sympathy between the inanimate and the animate, between man’s psyche and the whole cosmos [. . .] this cosmic sympathy affords the possibility of moral improvement through a patterning of the individual psyche on the cosmos.’<sup>61</sup> That cosmic sympathy is incarnated

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<sup>57</sup> Curwen, “‘What To Do’”, 13.

<sup>58</sup> Curwen, “‘What To Do’”, 13.

<sup>59</sup> Curwen, “‘What To Do’”, 13; 14.

<sup>60</sup> See Albert Blackwell, *The Sacred in Music* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> F. M. Cornford, ‘Mysticism and Science in the Pythagorean Tradition’, in Alexander P. D. Mourelatos (ed.), *The Pre-Socratics* (Garden City NY: Anchor Books, 1974), 8.

(sacramentalized) in religious ritual. According to Rudolph Otto, ‘We must have recourse to the way all other moods and feelings are transmitted, to a penetrative imaginative sympathy with what passes in the other person’s mind.’<sup>62</sup> Blackwell and many other music theologians raise an important point about the sacramental nature of musical sympathy in religious contexts: emotions, as Don Saliers suggests, ‘the communal act of singing has formed and expressed deep human emotions. Such emotions are not simply passing states of feeling or mood; they are capacities to consent to a sense of being in the world. If music is the language of the soul made audible, then human voices conjoined in community are primary instruments of the collective soul—a medium for what transcends the immediately commonsense world.’<sup>63</sup> Curwen would have admired these sentiments, not only because of their intrinsically theological import but because Tonic Sol-fa embodies liberal congregational embodiment in satisfyingly secular form, both in the music it teaches and the teaching its musicks.

The music it teaches does not disappoint, if according to Blackwell and Saliers congregational music—which Curwen consistently describes as ‘people’ music—has the capacity to embody the structure of a reasonable, cooperative society. Curwen developed his model at time when two systems, moveable and fixed doh, competed for hegemony: on the fixed side the ideologically fixed pedagogue John Hullah; on the moveable, Sarah Glover and her notional sidekick John Curwen. The problem with fixed doh would seem obvious, but Hullah failed to recognize it until it was too late. In the increasingly chromatic world of Romantic music modulation was frequent and frequently tonally distancing, and so a system in which C was always doh irrespective of its tonal function (as a tonic, dominant, subdominant, etc) would never have been tenable. Curwen made the most of Hullah’s

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<sup>62</sup> Rudolph Otto, and John W. Harvey (trans.), *The Idea of the Holy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, 60.

<sup>63</sup> Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology*, Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2007, Kindle loc. 213.

intransigence, and turned Tonic Sol-fa into a massive popular success. But the reasons for his success are not merely commercial; the music itself communicated an ideological liberalism Victorians wanted to hear. Curwen used solfeggio the way Sarah Glover had—to render psalmody congregational—and he applied exactly the same moral to the musical tale: ‘Transition, or ‘modulation,’ as it is called, may change the key note in the course of a tune, but the new key note governs its dependents exactly as the old one did. Every apparent exception only proves the rule.’<sup>64</sup> All pitches in other words, like all people, are created equal in the eyes of God. Only their function differs. All notes can serve any purpose; all notes are inherently free. Moveable doh taught liberalism—even liberterianism.

But what about sympathy? Mixed doh was underpinned by a comparable structure in which emotions are *sympathetically* allocated to modulating positions in the scale. Three columns represent foundational tonal hierarchies of tonic (doh-me-soh); dominant (ray-te) and subdominant (fah-lah); their comparable ‘mental effects’ (emotions) progress from (1) strong/firm-steady/calm-grand/bright and (2) rousing/hopeful-piercing/sensitive, to (3) desolate/awe-inspiring-sad/weeping; and hand signs reflect respective emotions: (1) doh, a fist; me, flat and horizontal; soh, an open palm facing towards the viewer; (2) ray, the hand tilted 45 degrees upward, fingers closed; te, the hand twisted, index finger pointing 45 degrees upward; and (3) fah, a finger hanging 45 degrees downward limply from the rest of the hand; and lah, the hand drooping at 45 degrees. A psychology of libertarianism, itself hotly contested today,<sup>65</sup> is, I believe, embedded in this system. Curwen not only liberates musical notes from previously fixed positions, he refuses to impose arbitrary structural constraints which limit the capacity of emotional experience and response. Curwen, in other words, develops the emotion of sympathy as a sympathy for emotion so that music and

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<sup>64</sup> John Curwen, ‘The Musical Scale of All Nations and All Times’, *Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, 10 (1853): [81 and 88], 81.

<sup>65</sup> See for example Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London: Penguin, 2012).



emotion can be aligned in a virtuous circle. If, as Spencer claims, musical sympathy generates our ability to repress ‘the antagonistic elements of our characters and to develop the social ones; to curb our purely selfish desires and exercise our unselfish ones; to replace private gratifications by gratifications resulting from or involving the pleasure of others’,<sup>66</sup> Curwen achieves it in Tonic Sol-fa. A seemingly materialistic stance may strike some readers as implausible, considering how deeply ingrained in Tonic Sol-fa is Curwen’s fundamentally evangelical background. But, influenced as much by currents in the psychology of sensation as the history of evangelical theology, Curwen is arguably as much a scientist as evangelist, and for him, as for many, free will does not necessarily imply a lack of causality.<sup>67</sup> Curwen pins the emotions to the scale to galvanize libertarian sentiment in the cause of freedom: are we not right in calling the scale, he asks, ‘the scale of all nations and of all times,— the scale to which the ear and the soul of man are attuned by the all-wise Creator.’<sup>68</sup> Whether evangelicals can be libertarians is a question in point, but the two are not historically incompatible. Curwen was deeply influenced by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, founder of the kindergarten movement,,<sup>69</sup> and both are claimed, perhaps controversially, as ancestors in libertarian and liberal thought: ‘For the vivid thought,’ Froebel considers, ‘the eternal itself, as such, requires and conditions free self-activity and self-determination of man, of the being created for freedom, and resemblance to God.’<sup>70</sup> For Pestalozzi, as Curwen I would suggest, ‘song proper cannot be regarded as a means of rising from vague sense impressions to clear ideas, but rather as a faculty that must be developed’;

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<sup>66</sup> Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, 74; 74.

<sup>67</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology: Prospects for a Christian Approach* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1989/1997), 124.

<sup>68</sup> Curwen, ‘The Musical Scale of All Nations and All Times’, 81.

<sup>69</sup> Bennett Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 187.

<sup>70</sup> Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man*, trans. Josephine Jarvis (New York: A. Lovell & Co., 1826/1885), 7.

indeed, ‘The same laws of the physical mechanism that develop in me the sense-foundations of knowledge, are also the sense-means of facilitating my virtue.’<sup>71</sup>

### 3b. Egalitarianism

Facilitating virtue is at the centre of egalitarian thinking as well; it is, arguably, at the root of Rawls’ reasonable person. Rawls himself says ‘Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.’<sup>72</sup> As Thomas Christiano suggests, ‘there is something about that person in virtue of which one *owes it to that person* to treat them in a certain way.’<sup>73</sup> Virtue is also at the heart of Victorian sympathy. Brigid Lowe, for example, explores in literature roughly the same type of ‘historical and political virtue of sympathy’<sup>74</sup> that Ruth Solie explores in music. In Victorian musical culture ‘sympathy’, Solie claims, ‘remained a positive virtue’.<sup>75</sup> An observable elision between virtue and sympathy is widespread in Victorian musical culture, particularly in literary culture. Delia de Sousa Correa discusses it in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876), for example, in a section of her book called ‘Musical sympathies: “meeting streams”’. It is debatable, however, whether sympathy in that context describes the *virtuous* sympathy of the Spencerian imagination or in fact its opposite—something controlling and overtaking, a type of sympathy based upon clairvoyance and the experience of telepathic, hypnotic and uncanny sensations.<sup>76</sup> Da Sousa

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<sup>71</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children: An Attempt to Help Mothers Teach Their Children and An Account of the Method by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*, trans. Lucy E. Holland and Francis C. Turner (London: Swann Sonnenschein; and Syracuse: C. W. Bardeen, 1894), 95; 181. [Does the semi-colon indicate an original page number vs. the translation, or do you mean to refer to two different pages? – TWO DIFFERENT PAGES]

<sup>72</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, rev ed., 1999), 3.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Christiano, ‘A Foundation for Egalitarianism’, in Nils Holtug and Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen (eds), *Egalitarianism: New Essays on the Nature and Value of Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), [41-82] 49.

<sup>74</sup> Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy*, 20.

<sup>75</sup> Ruth A. Solie, ‘“Music their larger soul”: George Eliot’s “The Legend of Jubal” and Victorian Musicality’, in Phyllis Weliver (ed.), *The Figure in Nineteenth-Century British Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), [107-131], 129.

<sup>76</sup> Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (Houndsmill and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 177-190.

Correa does us a service, nevertheless, because she inadvertently highlights a key feature of the egalitarianism underlying Rawls' concept of overlapping consensus—truth, and its relationship to virtue and ultimately the emotion of sympathy.

A good place to find these relationships problematized in musical culture — other than in the societal annals of the *Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*—is in the alternatively contentious evolutionary writings of C. Hubert H. Parry. Evolutionism was itself both an equalizer and unequalizer, however, depending upon one's place in the hermeneutical spectrum of Darwinian to non-Darwinian thought. In musical culture, as in culture more broadly, divergent evolutionisms produced and embedded variable levels of human equality. Libertarian/egalitarian Spencer may have believed that musical emotion was the chief media of sympathy, but he also maintained, unsympathetically, that music was strictly a function of civilization and not all people had risen to its developmental apogee (i.e., savages). Evidence of Spencer's contradiction is abundant in Victorian musical culture, not just in semi-academic denigrations of non-Western music,<sup>77</sup> but in popular literature capturing the nature of systemically degrading gendered inequality. In fact non-Western savages and women are almost entirely identical in Spencerian musical sympathy. It is worth noting, for example, the correspondence between race and gender implicitly structuring the teleological conviction of 'The Origin and Function of Music' (1857). Spencer begins his treatise with the description of emotional responses in a dog, and progresses up the Great Chain of Musical Being in evolutionary order, from infant and children to a woman (Mary) and a man (albeit an irascible one). Similarly, when recapitulating the evolution of speech into music, he progresses from the songs of savages, the Chinese and Hindoos and the Quakers to the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Chopin. More positively, perhaps, Darwin claims

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<sup>77</sup> See Bennett Zon, *Representing Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007).

with some adamance that all creatures make music, irrespective of their evolutionary position at any given time. Here in *The Descent of Man* is the crux of Darwin's argument:

A critic has asked how the ears of man, and he ought to have added of other animals, could have been adapted by selection so as to distinguish musical notes. But this question shews some confusion on the subject; a noise is the sensation resulting from the co-existence of several ærial 'simple vibrations' of various periods, each of which intermits so frequently that its separate existence cannot be perceived. It is only in the want of continuity of such vibrations, and in their want of harmony *inter se*, that a noise differs from a musical note. Thus an ear to be capable of discriminating noises—and the high importance of this power to all animals is admitted by every one—must be sensitive to musical notes. We have evidence of this capacity even low down in the animal scale [crustaceans, gnats, dogs and seals].<sup>78</sup>

While elsewhere in his writing Darwin would dig even deeper down the evolutionary chain to prove his point, his thesis was only a means to an end. In fact Darwin uses music to prove kinship between humans and animals.<sup>79</sup> The virtue—and for many Victorians the iniquity—of Darwin is his insistence on a material basis of egalitarianism.

Evolutionary egalitarianism forms as important a strand in scientific thinking today as it did in the Victorian period. In recent research Sergey Gavrillets, for example, describes egalitarianism as a 'syndrome', and 'one of the most intriguing unsolved puzzles related to the origin of humans.'<sup>80</sup> Like most Victorian materialists Darwin would try, perhaps unsuccessfully in his case, to solve the problem of egalitarianism without reference to causality (Darwin sedulously maintains a 'Creator' in the last sentence of the second to sixth editions of *The Origins of Species*). Music helped Darwin express egalitarianism because it

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<sup>78</sup> Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 568-89.

<sup>79</sup> Jane Spencer, 'Love and Hatred are Common to the Whole Sensitive Creation': Animal Feeling in the Century before Darwin', *After Darwin*, 26.

<sup>80</sup> 'Sergey Gavrillets, 'On the Evolutionary Origins of the Egalitarian Syndrome', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109.35 (2012): [14069-14074], 14069.

was linked to the intrinsically equalizing biological force of sexual selection rather than any designing God, and sexual selection was itself linked to the virtue of sympathy. Music helped Spencer express egalitarianism, I believe, because it was linked to what scientists today call emotional selection, a belief that the mechanisms of natural and sexual selection are insufficient to explain a sense of self<sup>81</sup>—an impression Darwin himself gives throughout *The Descent of Man*. Spencer encapsulates emotional selection in his essay ‘The Purpose of Art’ (1907?) where he correlates the advancement of music and emotional specialization:

Doubtless certain amounts of intellectual perception, implying appropriate culture, are needful for making possible the pleasurable feelings which music is capable of producing. These, however, are but means to an end, and it is a profound mistake to regard them as the end itself. An analogy will help us here. Before there can be sympathy there must have been gained some knowledge of the natural language of the emotions—what tones and changes of voice, what facial expressions, what movements of the body, signify certain states of mind. But the knowledge of this natural language does not constitute sympathy. There may be clear perception of the meanings of all these traits without any production of fellow feeling. Similarly, then, with the distinction between the knowledge of musical expression in its complex developments, and the experience of those emotions to which the musical expression is instrumental. Only in so far as its cultivated perceptions form a means to that excitement of the feelings which the composer intended to produce, does the intellect properly play a part; and even then, in playing its indispensable part, it is apt to interfere unduly.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See Ferdinand Fellmann and Rebecca Walsh, ‘Emotional Selection and Human Personality’, *Biological Theory*, 8.1 (2013): [64-73], 64.

<sup>82</sup> Herbert Spencer, ‘The Purpose of Art’, in *Facts and Comments* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1907), 32-33.

It can be no surprise that Victorian musicology –perhaps most notably the Oxford school of music criticism<sup>83</sup>—espoused emotional selection, if as an egalitarian evolutionary principle the virtue of sympathy helped forge individual (and consequently social) human identity in its trajectory towards overlapping consensus. Unrepentant, unreconstructed Spencerian acolyte C. Hubert H. Parry says as much throughout his writing, but it is especially pronounced in *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1893/1896). Parry prefaces his book with what is effectively a treatise on musical sympathy; for him the basis of all mature musical design—‘the ultimate origin of all music’—can be found in the ‘direct expression of feeling and an appeal to sympathetic feeling in others’.<sup>84</sup> And like Spencer, Parry inevitably locates sympathy in a teleological projection encompassing the lowest to highest possible forms: ‘The raw material of music’, he avers,

is found in the expressive noises and cries which human beings as well as animals give vent to under excitement of any kind; and their contagious power is shown, even in the incipient stage, by the sympathy which they evoke in other sentient beings. Such cries pass within the range of art when they take any definite form, just as speech begin when vague signals of sound give place to words; and scales begin to be formed when musical figures become definite enough to be remembered.<sup>85</sup>

Like all Victorians, Parry treats emotional selection selectively. Sympathy not only elevates man above the animal world, it also forms the virtuous basis of cooperative society and with it the organizing factor in its complex structure. And sympathy is not monochromatic; along with humanity more generally ‘there are many kinds of infinitely variable degrees of sympathy.’<sup>86</sup> But there is a self-overlapping consensus – a liberal Parry-dox – subsisting

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<sup>83</sup> See Bennett Zon, ‘Spencer, Sympathy and the Oxford School of Music Criticism’, in Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton (eds), *British Music Criticism and Intellectual Thought 1850 to 1950* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2018), pages forthcoming. TITLE IS CORRECT BUT WE WON’T HAVE DATE AND PAGES FOR A WHILE...

<sup>84</sup> C. Hubert H. Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1893/96; New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 13.

<sup>85</sup> Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, 1.

within the sympathy underlying these words, as there is in Spencer's evolutionary conception of music—as there is in Victorian culture more broadly. For all his egalitarianism Parry, like Spencer, believes in a Great Chain of Musical Being, even if he does concede to the idea that animals might make music. If, as Spencer says, savages have their *dance*-chants—‘a kind scarcely to be dignified by the title musical: at most, they supply but the vaguest rudiment of music, properly so called’;<sup>87</sup> for Parry the music of savages ‘shows that they hardly ever succeed in making orderly and well-balanced tunes, but either express themselves in a kind of vague wail or how, which is on the border land between music and informal expression of feeling, or else contrive little fragmentary figures of two or three notes.’<sup>88</sup> The parallelisms continue right up the Great Chain of Musical Being.

Where does this leave Parry, or Spencer, as egalitarian musical thinkers when much of their work may seem to us today ethically indefensible, and patently *unsympathetic*? There is no easy answer, but as Rob Boddice notes the same paradox subsists in Victorian issues over vivisection (what he calls ‘sympathetic selection’) and eugenics (‘sympathy as callousness’).<sup>89</sup> The syllogistic logic is as frightening in those debates as it is in music: sympathy ensured the survival of communities; vivisection (or eugenics) helps us survive because it teaches us more about the body; therefore, we should sympathize with vivisection (or eugenics) to enhance our survival. This is not to imply that ethically variable Parry was a vivisectionist or eugenicist (though Spencer is reputed to have advocated vivisection under state control, and his philosophy was easily co-opted to the cause of eugenics),<sup>90</sup> but there is reason to believe that music was broadly complicit in this culture of sympathetic distortion; why shouldn't it be, if as Parry suggests there are as many sympathies as human beings, and as many human beings as there are liberalisms. Parry may have taken from Mill ‘his

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<sup>87</sup> Spencer, ‘Origin and Function’, 68.

<sup>88</sup> Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Boddice, *Science of Sympathy*, 72; 116.

<sup>90</sup> Boddice, *Science of Sympathy*, 93 and 118-19.

uncompromising position on liberty, his attitude and commitment towards democracy, his wider view of utilitarianism, and a system of logic so broad in breadth as to protect him from the dangers of formalism’,<sup>91</sup> but he (in common with many Victorians) also drew breath from some indisputably racist contemporary ideas. As Nugunn Wattanapat says, ‘Parry’s egalitarian consciousness violated socio-cultural evolutionary ideas.’<sup>92</sup> Knowing this Wattanapat nonetheless argues for a more emollient, less self-conflicted, reading of Parry than I have previously suggested in my other writing—of ‘a highly eclectic and critical thinker’<sup>93</sup>—and certainly, as Jeremy Dibble suggests, he had ‘sympathy for egalitarianism and political reform.’<sup>94</sup> I would argue, conversely, that Parry was emotionally selective, and that like many evolutionary musicologists he used sympathy in the cause of characteristically Victorian forms of liberal ideological multiplicity, for as much as Parry represents musicology of the time he also embodies a culture of *egalitarianisms* and the often contradictory meanings of overlapping consensus.

#### 4. Conclusion

For us today there are clearly moral contradictions at the root of certain Victorian musical and political egalitarianisms, but one thing is sure: in the ideologically prismatic environment of Victorian liberalism equality and liberty were not just privileges but inalienable rights. How that came to be achieved in musical practice depended crucially upon variable approaches to the emotion of sympathy. For John Curwen, Tonic Sol-fa used moveable doh to create ‘holy rivalry and blending sympathies’ as a model for liberal congregationalism; for Parry, music engendered altruism, the ‘direct expression of feeling and an appeal to

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<sup>91</sup> Nugunn Wattanapat, ‘Sir Hubert H. Parry: An Intellectual Portrait, PhD diss., Durham University (2017), 52.

<sup>92</sup> Wattanapat, ‘Sir Hubert H. Parry’, 239.

<sup>93</sup> Wattanapat, ‘Sir Hubert H. Parry’, 369.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremy Dibble, *C. Hubert H. Parry: His Life and Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 109.



sympathetic feeling in others’<sup>95</sup>. For John Rawls more recently sympathy is at the root of liberal reasonableness, itself the root of overlapping consensus. The impartial spectator, he maintains for example, is endowed ‘with ideal powers of sympathy and imagination [. . . he is] the perfect rational individual who identifies with and experiences the desires of others as if these desires were his own.’<sup>96</sup> As Victorian sympathy edged into deeper and deeper evolutionary waters, however, the powers of sympathy began to be reinterpreted, and with those changes came different biological and psychological models of the individual and community. Eventually sympathy was superseded by the equally slippery word empathy [*Einfühlung*, feeling into], a term Edward Tichener translated into English in 1909 and used to denote an even closer feeling than sympathy. There are today as many consensually overlapping empathies as there are liberalisms, libertarianism and egalitarianisms—indeed as there are sympathies—and empathy would seem to have superseded sympathy in musicological interest.<sup>97</sup> This, I would suggest, makes the likes of Roger Scruton a relative exception.

So what happened to Victorian musical sympathy? Music psychology can help answer this question. Referring to empathy’s origins in eighteenth-century models of sympathy, Eric Clarke, Tia DeNora and Jonna Vuoskoski suggest that sympathy is about *imagining* how one would feel, whereas empathy is on some level or other actually feeling it. Music, as a cultural artefact, is ‘a means of socially learning that sympathetic attitude.’<sup>98</sup> To some extent this chimes with Edith Stein’s view of empathy as a processual act. In Stein’s view empathy precedes sympathy: ‘Empathy is a mechanism of “receiving” the other’s inner

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<sup>95</sup> Parry, *Evolution of the Art of Music*, 13.

<sup>96</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 24.

<sup>97</sup> Colwyn Trevarthen, [Original sources?] cited in Elaine King and Caroline Waddington (eds), *Music and Empathy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 18.

<sup>98</sup> Eric Clarke, Tia DeNora and Jonna Vuoskoski, ‘Kinds, Mechanisms, Contents and Origins of Musical Empathizing’, Reply to comments on ‘Music, Empathy, and Cultural Understanding’, *Physics of Life Reviews*, 15 (2015): 61-88, 63.

state, sympathy, a feeling that might (or might not) arise from it.’<sup>99</sup> The rise of empathy and sympathy’s processual reconfiguration is itself a function of environmental pressures on liberalism. As Edmund Fawcett recounts, driven by self-destructive liberal imperialism and faltering economic policies (to say nothing of the uncertainties engendered by the advent of Darwinian evolutionary randomness) liberalism from the 1880s to 1940s was a period of ‘damaged ideals and broken dreams.’<sup>100</sup> I wonder whether the rise of empathy parallels changes in our understanding of emotional selection. Does Spencer anticipate empathy? Victorian psychologist Alexander Bain suggests he does, writing about Spencer in *The Emotions and the Will* (1859): emotional movements ‘while distinct from central spontaneity, are not movements of volition. Their selection follows one law, the action of the will follows another law. The most general fact of emotional selection is that stated by Mr. Herbert Spencer.’<sup>101</sup> Spencer’s historical role in the liberation of sympathy is arguably paradoxical, but his place in the liberal context of Victorian musical culture cannot be underestimated. John Offer calls Rawls’ concept of the ‘equal liberty principle’ the modern counterpart of Spencer’s ‘equal freedom’.<sup>102</sup> He and Darwin both contributed to the practice of overlapping consensus that was music of the time, and though at odds and often self-conflicting they were representative of the ideological kaleidoscope of Victorian liberalisms. Curwen, Parry, Spencer and Darwin may have been only partially reasonable, but both individually and collectively their aspiration towards truth, virtue and sympathy is the essence of a liberal mindset; whether libertarian, egalitarian or both their use of music not only illustrates, but created, the very idea of an overlapping consensus.

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<sup>99</sup> Felicity Laurence, ‘Prologue: Revisiting the Problem of Empathy’, in King and Waddington, *Music and Empathy*, 22.

<sup>100</sup> Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The History of an Idea* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 198.

<sup>101</sup> Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1865), 309.

<sup>102</sup> John Offer, ‘Spencer’s Sociology of Welfare’, in Offer, *Herbert Spencer: Critical Assessments* 4, 357. [335-363]